METHOD AND SYSTEM FOR DISTRIBUTING
A PUBLIC INFORMATION RELEASE AUTHORIZATION (PIRA)
FORM OVER AN INTRANET

Related Application

This application is a continuation-in-part of
co-pending application Serial No. 09/596,629 filed June
19, 2000, which is based upon prior filed provisional

5   application Serial No. 60/141,306 filed June 28, 1999,
and provisional application Serial No. 60/146,254 filed
July 29, 1999, the entire disclosures of which are
incorporated herein by reference.

Field of the Invention

10   The present invention relates to the field of
data processing, and more particularly, to a method and
system for processing a public information release
authorization (PIRA) form.

Background of the Invention

15   Obtaining approval on information being
released to the public is a problem within large
companies. This process generally requires the author
to fill out a release authorization form, and mail a
paper copy to an administrator (such as the IP

20   administrator) that is set up to coordinate and handle
this task. Upon receipt of the release authorization

form, the IP administrator assigns a tracking number and forwards a copy of the release authorization form along with the information to be released to the appropriate approvers. The approvers receive the

5 information by inter-office mail, or by hand.

A recommendation by each approver is then mailed back to the IP administrator. This process is labor intensive. That is, all correspondence between the author, the intellectual property department, the

10 approvers, and other necessary parties are self-initiated. Consequently, there is a need for a user-friendly release authorization process that automatically distributes electronic documents within a data processing system.

15 ## Summary of the Invention

In view of the foregoing background, an object of the present invention is to provide a method and associated system that improves the distribution of electronic documents within a data processing system.

20 This and other objects, advantages and features in accordance with the present invention are provided by a method for distributing a public information release authorization (PIRA) form over an intranet. The method comprises creating and submitting

25 a PIRA form over the intranet, with the PIRA form being submitted by an author to at least one approver via e-mail with a hyperlink to the PIRA form. Comments for the PIRA form are transmitted by the at least one approver via e-mail.

30 The PIRA process is used to approve the internal and external release of technical papers, abstracts, presentations, reports, journal articles, books, videos and other information intended for presentation or publication outside of a particular

corporation. The PIRA process helps to speed up the time normally required to obtain approval, particularly when the information is to be reviewed by a half a dozen or more approvers.

The e-mail messages are easily transmitted and received between users within the intranet for prompting review of the PIRA form by the appropriate approvers. The hyperlinks embedded within selected e-mail messages allows an approver to access the PIRA form to provide a user-friendly and efficient method of distributing a PIRA form within an organization or company for review.

The intranet includes a plurality of users enrolled therein with each user having associated personnel information stored within the intranet. The method further comprises selecting a first level of approvers from among the plurality of users for reviewing the PIRA form, and transmitting a first notification message via e-mail to the first level of approvers. The first notification message has a hyperlink to the PIRA form.

The first level of approvers may comprise at least one of a manager, a program manager and a technical peer reviewer. The first level of approvers may be selected by the author, with selection of the technical peer reviewer being optional. Alternatively, the method may further comprise creating a profile of the PIRA form in response to accessing associated personnel information of the author, and at least one of the first level of approvers is automatically selected based upon the created profile. The first level of approvers preferably review the PIRA form concurrently.

The method may further comprise selecting a

second level of approvers from among the plurality of users for reviewing the PIRA form, and transmitting a second notification message via e-mail to the second level of approvers. The second notification message

5 also has a hyperlink to the PIRA form.

The second level of approvers may comprise at least one of a security administrator, a system administrator, a contracts administrator, a communications administrator, an export/import

10 administrator and a legal administrator. Typically, the second level of approvers may include as a minimum the legal administrator, the contracts administrator and the communications administrator. Additional approvers, such as the security administrator and the

15 export/import administrator may be selected by the system administrator. In addition, the second level of approvers preferably review the PIRA form sequentially. At this second level of review, the process is stopped when one of the approvers rejects the PIRA form.

20 Another aspect of the present invention is directed to an intranet for distributing a PIRA form that includes a first software module for creating and submitting a PIRA form over the intranet, with the PIRA form being submitted by an author to at least one

25 approver via e-mail with a hyperlink to the PIRA form. A second software module transmits comments for the PIRA form by the at least one approver via e-mail.

Yet another aspect of the present invention is directed to computer-readable medium having stored

30 thereon a data structure. The computer-readable medium preferably comprises a first data field containing data representing a PIRA form created by an author. The PIRA form is to be submitted over an internet. A second data field contains data representing an e-mail

35 message having a hyperlink to the PIRA form. The e-mail

message is to be transmitted to at least one approver via e-mail. A third data field contains data representing comments of the at least one approver, which are to be transmitted via e-mail.

Brief Description of the Drawings

FIG. 1 is a schematic diagram of an intranet system used to implement a public information release authorization (PIRA) process in accordance with the present invention.

FIG. 2 is a high level flow chart illustrating how a public information release authorization (PIRA) form is created and approved over an intranet in accordance with the present invention.

FIGS. 3-13 are user interface displays for the PIRA approval process in accordance with the present invention.

Detailed Description of the Preferred Embodiments

The present invention will now be described more fully hereinafter with reference to the accompanying drawings, in which preferred embodiments of the invention are shown. This invention may, however, be embodied in many different forms and should not be construed as limited to the embodiments set forth herein. Rather, these embodiments are provided so that this disclosure will be thorough and complete, and will fully convey the scope of the invention to those skilled in the art. Like numbers refer to like elements throughout.

A public information release authorization (PIRA) process according to the present invention is implemented in an intranet 10, as shown in FIG. 1. This intranet 10 may be localized within a corporation or business site, or may even be configured to link

more than one division of a corporation together. The intranet is separated from the rest of the internet by a firewall, which is a hardware/software combination that protects the intranet from unauthorized users, as

5   readily understood by one skilled in the art.

A key component of the intranet is an e-mail system and a web browser for implementing the PIRA process. The e-mail system may use normal internet e-mail addresses, except that it routes traffic within

10   an organization so the e-mail need not travel outside the intranet. Internal routers 13 and mail servers 15 send the mail to other corporate employees via the intranet. E-mail that travels to and from the internet from the intranet goes through the firewall. The PIRA

15   process may also be implemented over the internet using an encrypted or secured connection. For instance, remote sites are able to upload information to the intranet database server 10.

E-mail messages are easily transmitted and

20   received between users within the intranet 10 for providing notification and status of a particular PIRA form. Furthermore, hyperlinks embedded within selected e-mail messages allow a user to access a particular PIRA form, as will be described in greater detail

25   below.

The intranet 10 offers access only to enrolled or authorized users. That is, each user requires a selected password to match their user name prior to viewing a PIRA form. A server 12 processes

30   the method according to the present invention. In one embodiment, the server 12 includes a web or document server 14 that interfaces with a separate database server 16. Alternatively, the web server 14 and the database server 16 can be a single server 12, wherein

the server would include a hierarchical tree structure containing files pertaining to those stored in the database server. The server **12** is not limited to any particular operating system for implementing the PIRA process. Individual computers **18** are connected to the servers **12**. In one embodiment, each personal computer **18** includes a web browser since the PIRA process is web-based.

Information necessary for the PIRA process is stored within the database server **16**. In one embodiment, the intranet **10** uses active server web pages instead of static web pages, as readily understood by one skilled in the art. The web server **14** thus uses the active server pages to interact with the database server **16** to extract the necessary information and construct each hypertext markup language (html) page to be provided to the user. Whenever a change is made to any of the displays resulting from the PIRA process, these displays are automatically updated by the web server **14** so that each time a user logs into the PIRA process, the web server **14** provides the updated pages.

The PIRA process in accordance with the present invention is used to approve the internal and external release of technical papers, abstracts, presentations, reports, journal articles, books, videos and other information intended for presentation or publication outside of a particular corporation. The PIRA process helps to speed up the time normally required to obtain approval, particularly when the information is to be reviewed by a half a dozen or more approvers.

Referring now to FIG. 2, a high level flow chart illustrating how a PIRA form is created and

approved over an intranet **10** in accordance with the present invention will be described. From the start (Block **140**), the author creates a PIRA form using a template provided by the server **12**. After the PIRA form has been created and the author is satisfied with its contents, the PIRA form is then submitted to the server **12**.

The intranet **10** includes a plurality of users enrolled therein with each user having associated personnel information stored within the intranet. A first notification message is transmitted via e-mail to a first level of approvers at block **142**. The first notification message has a hyperlink to the PIRA form.

The first level of approvers is selected from among the plurality of users. The first level of approvers may include a manager **142a**, a program manager **142b**, and a technical peer reviewer **142c**, for example. The first level of approvers is selected by the author when the PIRA form is initially created. In one embodiment, a default of the PIRA process includes the manager and the program manager, with the technical peer reviewer being an optional selection by the author. Alternatively, a profile of the PIRA form may be created in response to accessing associated personnel information of the author, and at least one of the first level of approvers (such as the author's manager **142a**) is automatically selected based upon the created profile.

The first level of approvers preferably reviews the PIRA form concurrently, that is, they are all able to review and comment on the PIRA form at the same time. Comments generated and transmitted by the first level of approvers **142a-142c** are provided to the

server **12**. These comments can then be reviewed by the author.

If the first level of approvers approves the PIRA form, then a second level of approvers for
5 reviewing the PIRA form is selected from among the plurality of users at block **144**, otherwise, the PIRA form approval process stops. A second notification message is transmitted via e-mail to the second level of approvers. The second notification message also has
10 a hyperlink to the PIRA form.

The second level of approvers includes a security administrator **144a**, an export/import administrator **144b**, a legal administrator **144c**, a contracts administrator **144d** and a communications
15 administrator **144e**, for example. The contracts administrator **144d** is necessary if the information to be released is derived from a government contract. The communications administrator **144e** is primarily responsible for checking the format and grammar of the
20 information to be released.

Typically, the second level of approvers may include as a minimum the legal administrator, the contracts administrator and the communications administrator. Additional approvers, such as the
25 security administrator and the export/import administrator may be selected by the system administrator. The second level of approvers review the PIRA form sequentially, that is, one at a time. As illustrated in Block **144**, the security administrator
30 **144a** reviews the PIRA form at the beginning and at the end of this level of review. The security administrator **144a** initially reviews the PIRA form to determine if it is worthwhile to release, and if so, then the PIRA form is passed to the next approver in line. After the PIRA

form has successfully passed through the other
approvers **144b-144e**, the security administrator **144a**
again reviews the PIRA form. This time to determine if
the author has made any comments, and if so, what is
the impact on the information to be released.

If the PIRA form is rejected or if additional
material is being added by any one of the second level
of approvers **144a-144e**, then the PIRA form returns to
the beginning of the approval process. However, if
information is being removed, the PIRA process
continues.

Comments generated and transmitted by the
second level of approvers are provided to the server
12. These comments can then be reviewed by the author.
As noted above, the second level of approvers reviews
the PIRA form sequentially. Consequently, once the
security administrator **144a** reviews and approves the
PIRA form at the end of the second level of review, the
information is approved for release.

The application implementing the PIRA process
may be accessed from the invention disclosure process
disclosed in application Serial No. 60/141,306, or by
the PIRA application's web address. A user id and
password are required before viewing a PIRA form. When
accessing the PIRA application, the home page is
initially displayed, as shown in FIG. 2. Referring now
to FIGS. 2-13, one embodiment of display formats for
the PIRA form approval process will be described.

To prepare a new PIRA form, the user clicks
on "Prepare a New PIRA" at field **200**. Clicking on
field **200** causes a new PIRA form to be displayed, as
shown in FIG. 4. Required fields to be filled are
indicated with an asterisk. The author will not be
able to submit the PIRA form until the required fields

are filled in. When saving the PIRA form as a draft, the author will need to complete, as a minimum, the following fields: site name (field **202**), title (field **204**) and author(s) (field **206**).

In field **202**, the author selects the appropriate site in a Site Information drop-down box. In field **208**, the date is filled in automatically. In field **210**, the author types in the submission deadline, which is the date the information needs to be submitted to an outside agency for publication. For assistance, the user has the option of viewing a pop-up calendar **212** when choosing the submission date. If the information to be released requires government approval before initial publication, a substantial lead time, such as 2 months or more, for example, may be required for the PIRA approval process.

The title of the information to the released is entered in field **204**. The author chooses the type of information being released at field **214** from a pull-down menu. The pull-down menu (not shown) includes at least the following, for example: abstract, draft article (publication), final article (publication), presentation (charts only), book, video and World Wide Web item. The author is also required to answer at field **216** whether the information to be released includes any proprietary information, and at field **218** as to whether the information includes any Department of Defense (DOD) classified information. In the illustrated embodiment, the PIRA process is not set up to deal with DOD classified information, and consequently, classified information is not to be entered.

The name of the author submitting the information is entered at field **206**. The default name

for this field is the user preparing the new PIRA form. However, if the user is creating the PIRA form for another person, then the user should not delete their name from the author list. Otherwise, if the user

5   creating the PIRA form is not listed as an author, the user will not be able to submit, edit, delete or view the new PIRA form after being saved.

If the author wants to add additional authors to the submission, the initiating author clicks on the

10 "Add Authors" field **214**, and then adds the additional authors. If the author wants to edit information about any of the additional authors listed, the user clicks on the "Edit Authors" field **216**. Similarly, if the author wants to delete a listed additional author, the

15 author clicks on field **218**.

When the author clicks on the "Add Author" field **214**, the "Author Form" as shown in FIG. 5 will be displayed. The author may return to the submission form by saving, canceling, or using the browser's back

20 button. There are two ways to select an additional author. If the additional author is a company employee or subcontractor who would be in the corporate user directory, the author clicks on the "Select from User Directory" field **220**. An author selection window will

25 appear, and the author enters the last name (or partial last name) of the additional author and clicks on the "search" field.

The author may also search by the department number of the additional author by selecting the "dept"

30 field. The search results list will appear in the window. If the additional author is in the list, then the author clicks on the name. The Author Selector window will then close, and the author's information is entered into fields **222-230**. After reviewing the

displayed author information, the author clicks "Save" or "Cancel" to return to the PIRA form. The additional author's name will now be on the PIRA form.

If the additional author is not in the corporate user directory, then the necessary information is typed into the PIRA form. All the fields, except for the NT User id (field **224**), must be filled in. After entering the additional author's information, the author clicks on the "Save" or "Cancel" field **232** to return to the PIRA form. The additional author's name will now be on the form.

The next section of the PIRA form asks for general information about the author's submission. In the abstract field **234** (FIG. 6) the author provides a summary of the information. If this information is in another format (e.g., Word, PowerPoint), the author may add it as an attachment after the PIRA form is saved. The author should type "see attachment" in this field.

In the "keywords" field **236**, pertinent words or acronyms related to the information are provided. It is particularly useful to list synonyms and related words that best describe the topic of the information. When selecting the organization field **238**, a drop-down box will display an organization listing specific to the site selected in the "site information" field **202**. The author chooses the appropriate organization from the list provided.

The next fields **240-248** ask for information about where the information will be published or presented. The following information is to be entered: Full Title of Conference/Publication/Subject Matter in field **240**, Conference/Publication/Subject Matter Date in field **242**, Conference/Publisher Location in field **244**, and Conference Sponsor/Publisher in field **246**.

The author is to also answer in field **248** whether the Conference/Publication/Subject Matter is restricted to U.S. persons only.

The next fields **250-272** are directed to the origin of the subject matter with respect to the information being released, particularly whether or not the subject matter is derived from any work done on a government contract. In field **250**, the author answers whether the subject matter is based on, associated with, or related to any past or current government program or contract (classified or unclassified). This must be answered by all the authors.

The author then answers a series of other questions, based on whether the answer in field **250** is yes. If the answer is yes, the author then list the Program/Contract Title in field **252**, the Program/ Contract Number in field **254**, the Program/Contract Classification (classified or unclassified) in field **256**, and the Program/Contract Administrator in field **258** (FIG. 7). Finally, the author must select the "yes", "no" or "N/A" field **260** to answer the question, "Has the government customer approved the release of this information/subject matter?" If the answer is yes, the author should then write the name of the approver in field **262** and the agency/customer in field **264** who approved the release.

If the subject matter of the information being submitted is not related to a government program or contract, then the author answers the following "why was the subject matter developed/created?" in field **266**, and "how was the subject matter/development /research funded?" in field **268**. The next question asks if the information relates to an IR&D (Independent Research and Development) project in field **270**. If the

answer is "yes," the author enters the IR&D project name in field **272**.

The next series of questions in the PIRA form relates to invention disclosures or patent applications. If the subject of the information is related to any previously submitted invention disclosure or pending patent, then field **274** is answered yes, and the applicable invention disclosures and patents are listed in field **276**. Similarly, if the subject of the information should be protected by patents or trade secrets, the author clicks "yes" in field **278**, and then identifies the material that should be protected in field **280**.

The next question in field **282** (FIG. 8) is directed to whether or not the information has been published, presented, or released prior to the event connected to the present PIRA form. If the answer is yes, then the user list in field **284** the publication or event where this public disclosure occurred. Field **286** is directed to whether the final releasable item includes a copyright notice.

The next part of the PIRA form deals with DFOISR (Directorate of Freedom of Information Security Review). If the information has been through DFOISR, the author clicks "yes" in field **288**, and the DFOISR number is entered in field **294**. Fields **290** and **292** are directed to whether any modifications have been made to the information since the DFOISR number was issued.

The first level of approvers for the PIRA form is filled-in in fields **296**, **298** and **300**. In one approach, the author picks the first level of approvers, which includes the author's manager, program manager (project lead), and optionally, a technical peer reviewer.

Since the intranet includes a plurality of users enrolled therein, with each user having associated personnel information stored within the intranet, a profile of the PIRA form may be created in response to accessing the associated personnel information of the author. Consequently, in another approach, the first level of approvers is filled in automatically based upon the personnel information of the author. As a minimum, the author's manager is automatically filled in, with the author providing the program manager and the technical peer reviewer.

The first level of approvers reviewing the PIRA form do so concurrently. That is, each approver receives notice to review the PIRA form, via e-mail, at the same time. The e-mail includes a hyperlink to the PIRA form. To select and/or change an approver, the author clicks on a corresponding "Select/Change" field (not shown). The selection process works here just as it does in the Author Selection field, which means that any new approvers must be listed in the company directory.

After the required fields have been filled-in, the author may choose to either "save as draft" or "submit." If an attachment is being submitted with the PIRA form, it must be saved as a draft prior to being submitted. If the PIRA form is ready for review, the author clicks on the "Submit" field.

After the PIRA form has been submitted, the author can find it by clicking the "Edit/View/Approve PIRA" in field **201** on the application's home page as illustrated in FIG. 3. Clicking on field **201** causes the following to be displayed, as illustrated in FIG. 9: "Items You Have Created" in display **320**, "Items You Need To Approve" in display **322** and "Items You Have

Previously Approved" in display **324**. Clicking on a hyperlinked title in any of these displays will bring up a printable version of the PIRA form. The PIRA forms accessed from displays **322** and **324** can not be

5 edited. However, the PIRA forms accessed from display **320** may be edited when they have a status of "Draft."

In the "Items You Have Created" display **320**, the author can select the appropriate draft PIRA form and then the "Edit PIRA" option in field **330**. When the

10 changes have been completed, the author clicks on the "Save as Draft" field to maintain the PIRA form as a draft or clicks on the "Submit" field to start the approval process.

The author may edit the PIRA form only while

15 it is in the draft mode. Once the PIRA form is submitted, its status will change from "Draft" to "In Process." If changes need to be made after the PIRA form has been submitted, the author should contact the system administrator, which is typically the site

20 administrator. The function of the system administrator will be discussed in greater detail below.

While the PIRA form is in the draft mode, the "Attachments" option **332** can be used to upload files

25 that support the PIRA form, or to delete previously uploaded files. After a PIRA form has been submitted, only the system administrator can add or remove attachments to the PIRA form. If the author answered yes to "Does the paper include any DOD Classified

30 information?" attachments will not be submitted with the PIRA form.

To add an attachment, the author clicks on the field next to the appropriate draft PIRA form and selects the "Attachments" field **332**. The author clicks

the "Browse" field to navigate to the file to upload, and clicks on the file name, and then clicks "open." The file name and path will now appear in the text box. The author clicks on the "Add Attachments" field to

5   upload the file. If the upload is successful, a confirmation message will appear at the bottom of the page. Additional files may be uploaded. The author selects "Back" if finished with the attachments.

    If the upload is unsuccessful, a "file was

10 not uploaded" message will appear at the bottom of the page. To remove an attachment, the author clicks the "Delete" field next to the appropriate file name. A draft PIRA form may be deleted by clicking the field next to the appropriate PIRA form, and then clicking

15 the "Delete" field **342**. Once a draft PIRA is deleted, it cannot be recovered. To recreate it, the author will need to re-enter the information on a new PIRA form.

    Once a PIRA form has been submitted, it will

20 appear as "In Process" in the "Items You Have Created" display **320**. While a PIRA form is in process, the author may see the approver status and comments via fields **334** and **336**. To see where a PIRA form is in the approval process, the author clicks on the field next

25 to the PIRA form, and clicks on the "Approver Status" field **334**. An Approval Status page will list the names and roles of the people who need to approve the corresponding PIRA form. The status column may display the following: Due - The PIRA form has been submitted

30 to the person and is awaiting review; Approved - The PIRA form has been approved and the date of approval is listed; and Pending - The PIRA form has not yet been submitted for approval to this person.

    If a PIRA form has been rejected, the status

will be listed as "Rejected" both on the Approval

Status page and on the "Items You Have Created" display

320. To see any comments a reviewer has made regarding

the PIRA from, the author clicks on this field and then

5   clicks on the "View Comments" field **336.** Once the PIRA

form has been approved, the status will change to

"Approved." The author may view the approval status

and comments for an approved PIRA. For certain types

of PIRA forms, the author may select the "Add

10   Conference" option **338** and "Re-Submit" field **340.**

If an approved presentation or final article

is to be presented at a news conference, the author may

use the "Add Conference" field **338** to submit the

information for a news conference. The author clicks

15   the field next to the PIRA form and then clicks the

"Add Conference" field **338.** The new information will

need to be filled in, and then the author clicks on

"Submit." This new PIRA form corresponding to the

previously approved information will be assigned a new

20   file number and will have a shortened review cycle.

The Add Conference field **338** may only be

selected for PIRA forms that had "presentation" or

"final article" as their type. If the type was "draft

article" or "abstract," the "Re-submit" field is used.

25   The "Re-submit" field uses an approved abstract or

draft article as the basis for submitting a new PIRA

presentation. The new PIRA form will have the same

approval cycle as the original PIRA form.

To re-submit the PIRA form, the author clicks

30   on the field next to the title and then clicks the "Re-

Submit" field **340.** The answers to the questions on the

page are verified and the author then clicks "Save."

If the PIRA form does not contain DOD classified

material, the author will be prompted to upload the

paper.

If a PIRA form is rejected, the status will be listed as "Rejected." The author may now add or delete attachments, if needed, and then edit the PIRA

5 from to resubmit. To edit a rejected PIRA form, the author clicks the field next to the PIRA number and then clicks the "Edit PIRA" field 330. The author makes any necessary changes and then scrolls down to the bottom of the form. A new text box will be

10 displayed so that the author can enter comments to explain how the changes address the reviewer's reasons for rejecting the original submission. Any changes made to the attachments or to the form should be listed, and then the author clicks on the "Save" field.

15 The PIRA form will then be resubmitted to the first person in the approval cycle.

For each person listed as an approver on the PIRA form, they will receive e-mail notification asking them to go to the PIRA home page. From there, the

20 approver clicks on the "Edit/View/Approve PIRA," field 201 and goes to the "Items You Need to Approve" display 322. Each PIRA form listed will have the number, title, submission status, and approver's assigned role. The approver can review the PIRA form by clicking on

25 the PIRA number, which is a hypertext link. After the review has been completed, the approver clicks on the field next to the number and then clicks the appropriate field: Approve 350, Approve and Comment 352 or Reject and Comment 354. The Approver Status 356 and

30 View Comments 358 that previous approvers have made may also be reviewed.

For the assigned role of the Program Manager, they must use the "Approve & Comment" option 352 rather than the "Approve" option 350. A new page will be

displayed with specific questions for the Program Manager's review. The "List PIRAs Previously Approved by You" option is used to display any PIRA form that the approver has approved in the past. The approver may also view the approver status and any comments that previous approvers have made. The author clicks the PIRA number to view a selected PIRA form.

If an organization contact is the author of the PIRA form being submitted, there will be a link to an organization report from the home page. This option allows the organization contact to view the details of any PIRA form submitted for the applicable organization. If the organization contact is responsible for more than one organization, they will see all of the PIRA forms from these applicable organizations on one report. The home page of the PIRA form also includes links to a help and user guide **203**, current news **205** and contact information **207**.

As mentioned above, each site has an administrator. The administrator's functions will now be discussed with reference to FIGS. 10-13. When a site is created, the administrator sets up the site name and one primary system administrator. The system administrator then sets up at least one organization for the site, and may add other administrators who will have authority to perform all site administrative functions.

As shown in display **400** of FIG. 10, the primary system administrator's functions are divided into two categories, which are "Users and Groups" and "PIRAs." Under "Users and Groups," the system administrator may control what organizations their particular site has in field **402**, what the approver roles are in field **404**, and which individuals are

assigned to these roles in field **406**. The system administrator also places the approvers in the appropriate order for their site in field **408**.

As soon the site has been set up, the administrator will add at least one organization. The administrator clicks the "Add/Delete/Update Organizations" field **402** and then clicks the "Add New Organization" field. The administrator types in the organization name and clicks the "Select/Change" field to add the contact person. When the administrator clicks the "Select/Change" field, the Employee Selector window will open so that the contact person can be added. The last name or partial last name of the person to add is entered, and the administrator clicks the "Search" field. The administrator may also click the "Dept" field and search by department number.

The search results list will appear in the window. If the correct name does not appear in the list, the administrator clicks the "Cancel" field and does another search. If the person to be added is in the list, the administrator clicks on that name. The Employee Selector window will then close, and the contact person's information will be filled in on the "Adding an Organization" field. After the administrator saves the changes, the administrator is returned to the Organization Page. The new organization will now be on the site list provided in field **202**.

If the administrator wants the contact for their organization(s) to be an approver, the administrator clicks on the "yes" field next to the question "Use the organization contact as an approver?" The default answer to this question is "no," so if the administrator does not change it, the organization contact will not be an approver. If the administrator

changes the default after the organization is set up, the organization contact will only be added as an approver for PIRAs submitted after the change was made.

After an organization has been established, the administrator may update its information. To update, the administrator clicks the "Update" field next to the organization name. The update screen contains the same information as when a new organization is added. If an organization name is changed, the new name will replace the previous name in all draft, in-process, and completed PIRA forms.

To delete an organization, the administrator clicks the "Delete" field. A "Deleting an Organization" page will appear. When deleted, the administrator will also be asked to "Confirm Deletion" before returning to the Organization Page. The deleted organization will no longer be on the site's organization list.

Each site has three default approver roles: Contracts/Sourcing, Communications, and IPL/Legal as illustrated in display 410 in FIG. 11. The administrator has the option of selecting a security administrator and an export/import administrator.

To add an approver role, the administrator clicks the "Add to Roles" field 412. The administrator will need to fill in the following information: Role Name and Role Code. Role Name can be any series of alphanumeric characters up to a maximum of 45 characters and spaces. Role Code includes one to three alphanumeric characters. Once the administrator sets up a new role, the administrator assigns at least one person for this task.

The administrator may update any of the approver roles by clicking the "Update" field next to the role name. The administrator may change the Role

Name and Role Code for all roles except for Administrator and Contracts/Sourcing. The administrator may change the Role Name for these two, but cannot change the Role Code.

5   For any other roles, the administrator just types in the new name and/or code. The form will not be saved until the fields are filled in. Once the form is completed, the administrator clicks the "Save" field.

10   To delete an approver role, the administrator clicks the "Delete" field to the role to be removed. The administrator will be asked to confirm their deletion choice. If the default roles set up for an organization need to be modified, the administrator

15   will then need to assign people to function in these roles. The application administrator will have assigned a default administrator when a particular site is set up. The administrator of the new site may assign additional administrators, change the default

20   administrator, and/or assign people to other roles.

The default person assigned to the approval role is the one who receives notification that approval is needed for that role. Non-default people do not receive notification unless the administrator edits the

25   approver list for a specific PIRA form. Only one person may be the default in a role.

To add an approver or approver, the administrator clicks the "Add to Roles" field **412**. On a different page, the administrator will first choose

30   the Approver Role from a drop-down box, and indicate if the person is the default for this role. The system will assign a value of "no" unless the administrator clicks the "yes" field. The administrator then clicks the "Select/Change" field to add the person. Selecting

35   a person with the Employee Selector window will fill in

both the Name and NT user id boxes on this page. When finished, the administrator clicks the "Save" field and the person will be added in that role.

The administrator may update a person's role by either changing the assigned role or changing whether the person is the default assignee for the role. To do so, the administrator clicks "Update" next to the NT user id and changes the information on the next page, and clicks "Save" when done. If someone has been removed from a default role, someone else should be designated as a default before ending the session. To remove a person from an approver role, the administrator clicks the "Delete" field next to the NT user id. On the next page, this deletion is confirmed by clicking on the "Confirm Deletion" field.

If the person being deleted is in the default role, another person should be added to that role before ending the session. If there is no default designated for a role, PIRA forms will not be sent to that area for approval. In addition, if there is no default administrator, that particular site will no longer show up on the site list in the PIRA form. The administrator will thus need to delete the default person and then designate another person in that role as the default by updating that person's information and clicking the "yes" field by the question "Default?"

The administrator may also change the order in which PIRA forms are sent to the approvers by clicking "Change Order of Approvers" in field **408.** The Approver Role Order page lists all the roles for the administrator's site and the current order. This order may be changed by typing numbers in the "New Order" column, and then clicking the "Save" field. This new order does not affect in-process PIRA forms, but it will affect all those created after this change is

made.

From the Administrator's Functions page as shown in display **400**, the administrator can view information about in-process and completed PIRA forms. An in-process PIRA form is one that has not completed the review cycle. One or more approvers may have approved a PIRA form, but it is considered in process until all approvals have been received.

When the administrator clicks the "In-Process" field, the administrator will see a list sorted by PIRA form numbers. The administrator may view any PIRA form by clicking its hyperlinked title. The administrator may also perform the following actions by clicking the appropriate field "Edit PIRA" and "Edit Approver List" next to the disclosure, and then clicking the appropriate fields at the bottom of the page.

When the "Edit PIRA" form function is selected, the administrator may edit the information that the author submitted on the PIRA form. After any changes have been made, the administrator clicks the "Save" field. When the "Edit Approver List" field is selected, this allows the administrator to work with the Approver List submitted for a particular PIRA form. The administrator clicks the field next to the PIRA number and then clicks the "Edit Approver List" field.

A new page will list all the approvers, their roles, and their status. Status may be one of the following: Due - This approver has been asked to review the PIRA form but has not yet done so; Pending - This approver has not yet been asked to review the PIRA form; Approved - This approver has reviewed the PIRA and approved the request; and Rejected - This approver has reviewed the PIRA and rejected the request. Rejection comments can be viewed using the "View

Comments" field.

The administrator can select a different approver for any PIRA form that has a status of "Due" or "Pending" by clicking the "Change" field. The Employee Selector page will appear for those approvers chosen on the PIRA form and also for the Organization Approver Role. For other Approver Roles, the administrator will see a list of persons assigned to that role, and may choose another person from the list. If the status is "Due," the previous approver will be sent an e-mail informing them that the review is no longer required

The administrator may also insert an additional reviewer by clicking the "Insert" field before the row where the new reviewer is to be added. The Employee Selector page will appear for a directory search, and the person chosen will be added to the list with the role of Staff. The administrator may also perform the following actions "Attachments," "Approval Status," "View Comments," and "Delete PIRA" by clicking the appropriate fields, as will be discussed in greater detail below.

Clicking the "Attachments" field allows the administrator to add attachments to the PIRA form or to delete attachments already submitted. The "Browse" field is clicked to navigate to the file that is to be uploaded. After the file is open, the file name and path will now appear in the text box. The file is uploaded by clicking the "Add Attachments." A message confirming successful upload will appear at the bottom of the page. This field may also be used to upload additional files, or remove any uploaded files, or click the "Return" field if finished with the attachments. To remove an attachment, the "Delete" field next to the appropriate file name is selected.

Selecting the "Approver Status" field allows the administrator to view the status of a PIRA form by selecting the field next to the PIRA number and then selecting the "Approver Status" field. An Approval

5 Status page will open with a list of all approvers, the status of their reviews, the date of any actions taken, and the reviewers' phone numbers. To send an e-mail to a reviewer, the administrator selects the hyperlinked name. To print this page, the administrator selects

10 the "Print" field at the bottom of the page.

Selecting the "View Comments" field will display any approver comments submitted for the PIRA. Selecting the "Delete PIRA" field removes a PIRA from the system. Once the delete is confirmed, the PIRA

15 form is removed and cannot be restored.

When a PIRA has finished the review cycle, the PIRA form is now considered complete. As with in-process PIRA forms, when the administrator selects "Completed," a list sorted by PIRA numbers will be

20 displayed. The fields "Edit PIRA," "Attachments," "Approver Status," "View Comments," and "Delete PIRA" perform the same actions that they do for the in-process disclosures. The "Edit Approver List" function is not available for completed PIRA forms, but tracking

25 information can be entered for the PIRA.

The administrator can enter tracking information for a completed PIRA form by selecting the field next to the PIRA number and then selecting the "Edit Tracking Info" button. The Tracking Information

30 page fills in the PIRA file number and allows the following information to be entered: Date final draft received; Date sent to Director of Technical Operations; Director of Technical Operations; Award Granted (Yes/No) and Reason for award denial. After

35 entering the information, the "Save" field is selected.

The Search option in the display allows the administrator to find PIRA forms using various criteria. The administrator may search by the following: Type of PIRA; File Number; Title; IR&D

5   Project; Contract Title; Start Date and Enter Date. The search criteria is entered and then the administrator clicks on the "Search" field. The results will appear on the same page underneath the search criteria form. The administrator may search

10   with new criteria by selecting the "Reset" field, entering the new criteria, and selecting the "Search" field.

The "Report" function lists all PIRA forms for the administrator's site, and the report is sorted

15   first by organization name and then by the PIRA number. The "Print A Blank Form" function produces a blank PIRA form that can be printed by using the browser's print function.

The system administrator's function have just

20   been discussed, but now the application administrator's functions will be discussed. The application administrator is responsible for the overall management, operation, and support of the PIRA application process. As an application administrator,

25   the administrator can add or delete other administrators, create and update sites, update the news screen, and run reports. The application administrator can also have access to the administrative functions of all other sites.

30   To add or delete an application administrator, the application administrator clicks the "Add/Delete Application Administrators" **422** field in display **420** (FIG. 12). To add an application administrator to the authorized list, the applicant

35   administrator selects the "Add New Administrator"

field. The "Administrator Selector" window will
appear. To search, the "Last Name" or "Dept" field is
selected, and the last name or the department number
(or partial information) is filled in, and then the
5   "Search" field is selected. When the search results
are displayed, the appropriate name is clicked on. If
the person is already listed as an application
administrator, a message stating this fact will appear.

To delete an application administrator from
10   the list, the "Delete" field is clicked next to the
administrator's name. A message will then ask for this
deletion to be confirmed. If "OK" is clicked, then the
person will be removed from the list. If the "Cancel"
button is clicked, the application administrator will
15   not be removed.

A site must be defined with some basic
information before it can appear in the PIRA Form's
site information drop-down box. The application
administrator may create a new site by providing this
20   information, and the application administrator may also
change the definition of an existing site. To add a
site, the "Add/Update Sites" field **424** is clicked, and
then the "Add New Site" field is clicked and the
following information is entered, as shown in display
25   **430** (FIG. 13).

The Site Name is displayed in a drop-down
box. The assigned site name allows the author to
clearly identify the appropriate site when filling out
the PIRA form. The description should include a
30   contact name and phone number. The Start Letters is a
one to three character code that may be alpha, numeric,
or alphanumeric. This code must be different from other
site codes already defined in PIRA, and once
established, it cannot be changed.

35   The information will not be saved until all

the fields are filled in. Once the form is completed, the application administrator clicks the "Save" field and the site will now be added. The application administrator may also click the "Cancel" field to

5   return to the "Site List" page.

Many other modifications and other embodiments of the invention will come to the mind of one skilled in the art having the benefit of the teachings presented in the foregoing descriptions and

10   the associated drawings. Therefore, it is to be understood that the invention is not to be limited to the specific embodiments disclosed, and that modifications and embodiments are intended to be included within the scope of the appended claims.